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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0424
INFO RUEHDIR/RPO DUBAI 0425
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI 0347
RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 RPO DUBAI 000235

SIPDIS

EO 12958 DECL: 6/9/2019
TAGS PGOV, PREL, PINR, KDEM, IR

SUBJECT: IRAN'S FIRST FAN: DISSATISFACTION WITH AHMADINEJAD MAY
EXTEND FROM THE SOCCER PITCH TO THE BALLOT BOX
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CLASSIFIED BY: Timothy Richardson, Acting Director, Iran Regional Presence Office, Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

1. (C) Summary: As emotions run high following a week of adversarial debates between Iran's four presidential candidates, the outcome of the r

MIXING SPORTS AND POLITICS

2. (SBU) Since British oil workers first introduced the sport to Iranians in the early 20th century, soccer has developed into one of Iran's n

3. (C) As a result of its enormous domestic fan base, soccer has become highly politicized in Iran. According to an IRPO contact closely invol

4. (C) President Ahmadinejad, in particular, has staked a great deal of political capital in Iranian soccer. A personal fan and former player,

THE GEORGE STEINBRENNER OF IRAN

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5. (SBU) Despite the 2006 FIFA suspension, Ahmadinejad's personal involvement in Team Melli has only grown in significance. In June 2008, Ahma

6. (C) Because of the government's strong influence - IRPO's contact claims that Iranian intelligence services have files on most prominent sc

7. (C) Despite Ahmadinejad's support, Iran's chances of qualifying for the 2010 World Cup are slim. Following last week's disappointing 0-0 dr

COMMENT

8. (C) Through his decidedly public involvement with Team Melli, Ahmadinejad has inextricably linked himself to the outcome of Iran's bid to c
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reflects the problems that Ahmadinejad's challengers claim the country has suffered under his administration. Whereas Iran achieved internation